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C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 001596

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [PGOV](#) [KPKO](#) [CG](#) [UG](#)

SUBJECT: LRA UPDATE: CONGOLESE TROOPS MOVE TOWARD ABA

REF: KINSHASA 1584 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: PolCouns MSanderson, reasons 1.4 b/d.

1. (C) Congolese Air Force General John Numbi told PolCouns September 27 that the first 200 (of a total of 500) Congolese commando troops left Kinshasa en route for Kisangani. Numbi said an additional 100 (again of a total of 500) commandos also were dispatched from Kamina training base where they had been sent to take part in brassage (the process which integrates the military forces of the forming combatants into coherent units). These troops are also en route to Kisangani. Numbi said he believes that no later than Sunday October 2 he should have successfully transported all 1,000 troops to Kisangani, barring unforeseen difficulties. (Comment: These troops are flying on Congolese Antonovs, so unforeseen difficulties unfortunately are possible. End Comment.)

2. (C) MONUC also began September 27 moving elements of the Congolese First Integrated Brigade from Bunia (where most of them are based) to Aru, via a series of MONUC helicopter flights carrying about 50 troops on each run. Numbi said the objective, as ordered by President Kabila, is to have 2,800 Congolese troops situated near Aba by the beginning of next week. (Comment: This is a slight distortion of what President Kabila actually said, at least according to the readout of the meeting provided by Minister of Interior Mbemba, who said Kabila ordered the troops to be "ready for action" by the weekend. Numbi's evaluation of the likely timing is, however, probably more accurate, given all the logistical complications involved. End Comment.) MONUC also will transport two of Numbi's aviation specialists from Aru to Aba September 28 to survey the airfield at Aba to see if it can be made useable for landing Antonov transport aircraft, which would actually speed the Congolese troop deployment.

3. (C) There was no progress nor new initiatives reported in disarmament/surrender talks September 27.

4. (C) Comment: FARDC apparently is making its best efforts to comply with President Kabila's directive to deploy troops and, with MONUC assistance, could manage the full deployment of 2,800 men -- although probably not until late next week. We do not believe that the long-neglected airfield at Aba, which apparently once could receive Antonovs, can be made usable again quickly enough to matter in this crisis.
MEECE